

God with Us Psalm 23:1-6

Some reserve this topic for a Christmas sermon. But I think it a topic much needed in the world at this moment. Because it matters that God is with us at all times.

Jesus came into the world as *Immanuel*, that is “**God with us.**” Having a relationship with God is the most important relationship we will ever have. **When God is with us, we have His favor and blessing.** If God is absent from our lives, we are spiritually alone and without hope. And for this reason, we should all want God in our hearts and in our lives. We should want to cling to Him in all aspects of our lives, especially in the uncertainty of our modern world. And as Jesus always put God and His will first in His life; We also need to learn to put Jesus first in our lives as well, always seeking to please Him - **John 8:29** says, “**And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.**”

So, what happens when God is with us? What difference does it make? Let’s consider the case of Noah. In the days of Noah, “**The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**” (**Gen. 6:5**). The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in His heart. God was determined to blot out man, yet “**Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord**” (**Gen. 6:8**). Noah and his family, eight persons, were saved; but the rest of people on earth perished in the flood.

There is also the story of Joseph, his brothers hated him and sold him into slavery, yet God took care of him. **Genesis 39:2-3** tell us, “**The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.**” Stephen in **Acts 7:9-10** speaks of this: “**And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.**”

In later year, God was with the judges of Israel. **Judges 2:18** says, “**Whenever the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge, and he saved them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge. For the LORD was**

moved to pity by their groaning because of those who afflicted and oppressed them.”

It was said of David, that he was a man after God’s own heart. Though he suffered through many trials, **1 Sam. 18:14** says of him, *“And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him.”* When God is with us, He blesses us and helps us through our struggles and challenges.

It was said of King Hezekiah, *“he did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done.”* Hezekiah *“clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments.”* As a result, **2 Kings 18:7-8** says, *“And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. He struck down the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.”* *God blessed Hezekiah, because Hezekiah clung to the Lord and kept His commandments.*

The Lord God said to Israel in **Isaiah 41:10**, *“fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”* When we cling to God, He clings to us. **James 4:7-8** says, *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.”*

When God is with us, that doesn’t mean we will never suffer or be tempted.

We all face trials, heartaches, and difficulties. And anyone who has read the stories of Joseph, David, or Hezekiah knows that their lives were not always easy. What God being *“with us”* does mean, *is that we will never be alone in our temptations, our struggles, and our suffering.* **We look to God for our strength, our comfort, and our hope.**

What happens, then, when people forsake God and no longer have His blessing? I can think of a few illustrations. Do you remember Samson and Delilah? Samson’s power came from God. And as long as he observed God’s ways, God was with him. Delilah wanted to know the source of Samson’s strength. **Judges 16:16-20** tells the story: *And when she pressed him hard with her word’s day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. And he told her all his heart, and said to her, “A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man.”* When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines,

saying, “Come up again, for he has told me all his heart.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. And she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” And he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will go out as at other times and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the LORD had left him. He could no longer defeat the Philistines. Thankfully, his hair grew back and after he prayed to God, God restored his strength.

Scripture gives us more than one picture of Solomon. When Solomon first became King, **2 Chron. 1:1** says, “Solomon the son of David established himself in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.” But later, Solomon’s many wives led his astray. **1 Kings 11:6-9** says, “So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so, he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice...” Because he took foreign wives and built worship places for them to foreign gods; God was no longer pleased with Solomon.

The people of Judah in later years turned away from God and followed Baal and other Canaanite gods. They believed that they could practice idolatry and immorality and still be right with God. **Jeremiah 2:12-13** says, “Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” The Jews left the God who loved them for their worthless gods who were only manmade pieces of stone and wood. God says in **Jer. 5:29-31**, “Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?” An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests’ rule at their direction; my people love to have it so, but what will you do when the end comes?”

We too must ask the question, if we have forsaken the Lord, what will we do at the end of it, when God holds us responsible. They chose sin over righteousness and

then they hardened their hearts against God. **We must be careful to keep our hearts close to God.** **Jer. 6:15** says of Jerusalem, *“Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown,” says the LORD.*” I see even in our culture today, some who are never ashamed of immorality and don’t know how to blush over their sins.

Hebrews 3:12-13 warns the people of God today, *“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”* The idea that Christians who turn from God cannot lose their souls is a myth. God urges us to stay faithful to Him and to continue worshipping with the church. **Hebrews 10:25** says, *“not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

Some have decided to forsake assembling with the church altogether. **Hebrews 10:26-31** says, *“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

God has a track record of punishing those who forsake him. We must not, as Jerusalem did in the days of Jeremiah, listen to the wrong people and take the grace of God for granted. The Jews hardened their hearts and refused to repent. And God punished them. God will punish us too, if we harden our hearts and refuse to repent. God is the God of grace, but He is holy and just God who punishes sin.

James puts it this way in **James 5:19-20**, *“My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that*

whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Most people know **John 3:16**, but too many wish to ignore **John 3:18**, *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”* You cannot expect God to be with you and bless you, if you do not believe in Him and serve Him. According to **Eph. 2:12**, people who are outside of Christ are *“separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”* So, you see, it does matter whether you are with God or whether God is with you.

In **John 14:23-24**, Jesus said, *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.”* Those whom God loves and with whom He makes His home are those who love Him and **Keep His commandments**.

If you have the Lord with you in this life, you can live with Him in the life to come. In **2 Cor. 5:6-8** we read, *“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”* If you wish to be home with the Lord in eternity, then we need to the Lord make His home with us on this earth.

To begin a relationship with the Lord, you must place your faith and trust with Him. Believing in Jesus is more than just acknowledging that He exists; it also means that you not only believe in Him, but also in His words and promises as well. You will turn away from sinful things and begin living for the Lord and in accordance with His words – that is what it means to repent. When you have faith, and love, and a penitent heart, you will then confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and in accordance with His command you will be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit – just as He teaches in **Acts 2:38**. What are you waiting for, obey Him and live.